

CONGRESSMAN SHERWOOD BOEHLERT (R-NY)
OPENING STATEMENT FOR TEACHER HEARING
April 14, 2005

I'm going to keep my opening comments brief so we can get to our impressive witnesses without further delay.

Let me just say, though, that there is no issue within our jurisdiction that I care about more deeply than science and math education, especially at the pre-college level. And I suspect that every one of my colleagues on this dais would say the same thing.

None of the other things this Committee wants to see done -- whether it's developing a hydrogen car or maintaining a presence in space -- none of these things can be accomplished unless we have the scientists and engineers to do the work and a scientifically literate citizenry who will support it and learn from it. And, of course, there's only one way we can create those scientists and engineers and educated citizens, and that's through education -- starting from earliest childhood.

And who will do the educating? Parents, surely, and, for better or worse, the popular culture. But most critical are our nation's teachers. That's why one of the first hearings I held as chairman of this Committee was with the Presidential Math and Science Teaching Awardees, and I promised then to make the hearing an annual event.

You'd think that this sort of hearing would be happening all the time, but, unfortunately, that's not the case. Instead, Congress talks constantly about education, but it rarely listens, and it listens least of all to the most important experts -- actual classroom teachers, the folks at the front lines of our nation's educational system.

So today's hearing offers us a rare opportunity to hear directly from teachers – and not just any teachers, but those who have been recognized as the best. So we're eager to hear what you have to say.

We want especially to learn how the federal government can help you do your jobs. Which federal programs have been helpful and which have not worked? Please be candid and specific in your answers, and describe particular experiences that you have had. We hear policy prescriptions and theories all the time; we want to hear from you about real life.

But before we begin, let me just congratulate each of you, not only for winning this prestigious award, but for doing the incredible work that enabled you to earn it. We want to hear from as many of you as possible, so we'll go through our usual hearing – listening to testimony and asking questions to our panel of four teachers – and then, if time allows, we'll open the floor for a while to comments from any of the other awardees.

I'm eager to hear your testimony.